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ABSTRACT

To remain a teacher or not will probably be among the most difficult decisions to be made by a first-year teacher. Teaching is a type of work from which a person can experience the mental and physical growth of thousands of human beings. Unfortunately, teaching can also be discouraging when the teacher is left to her or his own means to handle the complex personalities of so many individuals: students, parents, administrators, district personnel, and general community members. This handbook, based upon the writer's own experiences inside the classroom from 1967 until the present (2001), aims to help new teachers survive that second or third year. The handbook includes anecdotal examples that were written on a daily diary or on official or unofficial memo documents. The intention in developing the handbook was to offer experience to those who are sometimes faced with a mean-spirited person or are employed within a non-supportive environment. Following each anecdotal section in the handbook is space for the beginning teacher to write her or his own solution to the anecdotal situation--pseudo-initials have been used to represent real individuals involved. Identified quotes regarding teaching have been included. (NKA)

ED 455 541

ALPHABET SOUP: A PRIMER FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

by

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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K. Lynn

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CS 217 672

DEDICATION: To all the beginning teachers who have asked me for advice, guidance, and support.

HOC OPUS, HIC LABOR EST

Teachers at inner city or low-income area schools are challenged in ways that other teachers do not experience. All teachers are ready to achieve academic excellence, but inner-city/low-income area schoolteachers must be self-confident, self-aware, and immovable regarding their academic and cultural values. Many inner-city/low-income schools are intolerant regarding business world expectations, which has been party to the unprecedented educational and social failure of public schooling.

The increasing pressure within U.S. public schools to attain parity for underachievers has prompted teachers and administrators to lower their cultural and academic standards. Students are allowed to curse adults, assault adults, refuse to complete assignments, and vandalize school facilities, often in the guise that "their" culture allows such behaviors. Poverty and race have become an excuse for behavioral typing.

Like marriage, "you really never know the person until that contract is signed", the teacher will not know, choosing a school, if a match has been made. Classroom teaching will not be the insular College of Education experience.

Remaining a teacher will probably be among the most difficult decisions you will make as a first-year teacher. You will participate with many workshop and in-service professionals, and you will receive advice from classroom teachers. At the termination of your first year, if dissatisfied with your position, you may determine that your contract does not allow for transfer to another school until you have earned tenure. Hopefully, this handbook based upon this writer's experiences inside the classroom from 1967 to present

will help you survive that second or third year. This handbook includes anecdotal examples that were written on a daily diary or on official and unofficial memo documents.

With administrative and parental support, teaching can be an exciting and rewarding life endeavor. Other than being able to save a life, I cannot imagine any type of work from which a person can experience the mental and physical growth of thousands of human beings.

Unfortunately, teaching can also be discouraging when the teacher is left to her own means to handle the complex personalities of so many individuals: students, parents, administrators, district personnel, and general community members. My intention producing this handbook is to offer experience to those who are sometimes faced with a mean-spirited person, or is employed within a non-supportive environment. Following each anecdotal section is space for you to write your own solution to the anecdotal situation. (Pseudo-initials have been used to represent individuals involved.) Identified quotes regarding teaching have been included.

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As Dr. Busby was showing King Charles II around his school, it was noticed that, contrary to etiquette, the headmaster kept his hat on in the royal presence. Busby excused himself in these words: "It would not do for my boys to suppose that there existed in the world any greater man than Dr. Busby." [Richard Busby (1606-95), headmaster of Westminster School, London, from 1640. He had a reputation as both

teacher and disciplinarian. (From: 1985. Fadiman, Clifton. The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

A: ***Administrative*** War Games: (R.) took me to task for failing a high percentage of Florida History students, noting the course was an elective. He suggested that my other assigned elective course, Black History, would be eliminated because the course didn't warrant elective status since American History (a required course) covered black-U.S. history. He insinuated that my job was "in-jeopardy" because of my grading standards. Later, another teaching colleague and I went to (R.) to suggest that we be advised of departmental American History curriculum plans; that a particular day be set aside for the members to plan (planning was scheduled for a select few of the thirteen-member department). (R.) went to his close supporter (L.) and told him that the colleague and I had specifically complained about (L.), a lie to discredit us. This resulted in verbal abuse from (L.) to us. Other department members and the student assistant witnessed the abuse. (L.)'s shouts to us could be heard throughout the TPA (teacher planning area), as (R.) remained inside his office. (R.) nor (L.) ever offered an apology.

Your solution:

Grade justification is the most difficult part of teacher documentation, especially when the administration makes exceptions for students due to parental desires or when faced with district-level exceptions. Some teachers will "fight" to the end, refusing to change a grade. Sometimes the administrators, during holiday breaks change the grade. I have been threatened, compromised, and cajoled by parents, administrators, and coaches regarding student grades. My advice is to document (keep a diary of all conversations and a copy of all correspondence) for future legal conflicts, and to follow the direction of the immediate supervising administrator. To relieve your professional distaste for such episodes, provide a meaningful "make-up" exercise for the student. Most times, you will learn that the student knows her/his grade should not be changed and will accept the "make-up" cheerfully. Other times, you will have a student who will let the entire class know that you were "beaten". Ignore the win-lose situation. Accept that you were able to reach a compromise with the additional assignment; that you advised other students that grades are legally a private matter between student and school; and leave the situation with the administration noting that you were "flexible". If the result "stings" too much, continue to appear cooperative, and file transfers. You must keep in mind that references are

primarily telephoned exchanges, not necessarily what appears on your annual evaluation form.

Administrative methods for "punishing" the aggressive teacher are extra duties, overloading of basic students, and more than two preps (different courses you must teach within one day). Your personal assignment is to document duties and preps of other members within your team or department. You then prepare a letter of redress, stating that these duties and preps must be rotated on an annual basis. If this does not occur, your next level for discussion is your district curriculum supervisor, and then your professional or union representative. Upon notification, most administrators will recognize that the burden must be a shared one.

Regarding isolation by colleagues via departmental or team planning, suggest that the department head or team leader produce an agenda for upcoming meetings. Timely notification of faculty meetings is generally a contract bargaining issue.

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops. [Henry Brooks Adams (1838-1918), grandson and great grandson, U.S. Presidents, The education of Henry Adams, Chapter 20. (From: 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

B: Boards (black, white, green, cork). This teacher wrote the following memo to the principal: "Is it possible to have the blackboard from a room not in use moved to replace

the one I have in 212? Writing on the present board is very difficult and consequently quite frustrating. Thank you."

(The board was never replaced.)

Your solution:

A preferred method would have been to contact the custodial or maintenance personnel -- the person who normally cleans that particular classroom. Personal contact is imperative with maintenance for continued satisfaction regarding room maintenance. If that particular individual does not offer help, then a memo to your department head or team leader is appropriate. If no response is received, or if the answer is no money, then prepare a budget item for a portable board and buy with your individual supply allowance or ask your district curriculum supervisor to fund. If you have a parent or business community aide in your classroom as a volunteer, this person can often find extra finances for you.

Education is a thing of which only the few are capable; teach as you will only a small percentage will profit by your most zealous energy. [George Gissing (1857-1903), The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft. 1, 22. Rycroft "(1). . .The imaginary journal of a recluse who enjoys release from poverty and worry, amid books, memories, and reflection." (2). From: (1) 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown and Company; (2) 1962. Harvey, Sir Paul. The Oxford Companion to English Literature. Oxford: At The Clarendon Press.]

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C: Counselor-protected Territories: While asking the guidance counselor to speak to children regarding rude behavior toward a guest speaker, a student hits another. Counselor objects to being involved during chastising of students, in that, ". . .(she) should not have to compromise (her) position as a counselor and confidante, with punitive action".

Your Solution:

A fact of the institutional hierarchy is that counselors are often designated pitch-hitters for administrative duty overloads; thus, they have the first avenue available to the principal. You will have to note the individual personalities of the counselors, as well as, their perceptions of their roles. Even though you may have been assigned a particular counselor for your grade level, you will find that when there are differing opinions among the individual counselors, the counselor who professes a philosophy similar to yours will aid you with difficult situations. If an immediate crisis is unfolding, your best source of backup is a teacher in your immediate area. Do not try to facedown a situation that is becoming physical. A dangerous confrontation requires immediate attention from an administrator or resource officer. Send a student or use office call-alert.

Delightful task! To rear the tender

thought,

To teach the young idea how to shoot.

[James Thomson (1700-1748), The Seasons. Spring, Line 1149. (From: 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.)]

D: *Duty*: You have been asked to fill-in for the Chapter 1 instructor, who was called away from her class for an emergency at home. You are not happy about losing your conference and planning period. You note that the teacher had been letting the students watch Bambi as their assignment.

Your solution:

You are a professional educator. Improvise. Instruct the students to create a story about a baby deer. They can be divided into groups with one person as the recorder, one person as the spell checker, one person as the illustrator, etc.. You will leave with the satisfaction that you provided meaningful instruction during your hour with the class. Document your

time assigned to the emergency request. You may, in the future, have to provide a log to the principal regarding how often you have been requested to "fill-in" for someone else. Principals are not always aware of these assignments. An assistant or vice-principal may be scheduling the emergency "fill-ins".

Shortly after his appointment as professor of music at the University of California, Los Angeles, Heifetz was asked what had prompted this change of directions in his career. "Violin-playing is a perishable art," said Heifetz solemnly. "It must be passed on as a personal skill; otherwise it is lost." Then, with a smile, he continued: "I remember my old violin professor in Russia. He said that someday I would be good enough to teach." [Jascha Heifetz, world famous Russian born violinist who obtained U.S. citizenship, 1925. He commissioned major works for the violin. (From: 1985. Fadiman, Clifton. The Little Brown Book of Anecdotes. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.)]

E: ***Evaluations***: Principal writes: "Students need NOT copy the objective of a lesson. You need only to state the objective or have a student read the objective. At the end of the lesson, as well as, during the lesson, you can check for understanding by asking questions, such as, 'What did we do today?' or 'Who can tell us what we learned today?', etc.. We will have our usual conference. However, I wanted you to be aware of the above right away. Good lesson!"

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You have made copying the objective of the day a ritual. Students arriving to class, immediately apply themselves to the writing exercise. Your purpose is to increase writing and reading skills, as well as, comprehension of the written assignment. You believe students will better retain information if they write the objective.

Your solution:

Some administrators will follow-up an evaluation comment to an exact correction; thus, the teacher would not be able to continue the writing exercise. Following the principal's suggestion, the objective will have to be dictated for writing practice. In order to keep students used to an immediate writing exercise for the beginning minutes of the class, create a vocabulary list from or relating to the objective. The students can be writing that list and defining the words as you complete your attendance register.

The man who knows and knows he knows,

To him your homage bring;

He wields the power that waits and wins,

And he is rightful king.

[Samuel Valentine Cole (1851-1925), poet. (From: 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.)]

He who knows not, and knows not that

He knows not, is a fool. Shun him.

He who knows not, and knows that he

Knows not, is simple. Teach him.

He who knows, and knows not that he

Knows, is asleep. Waken him.

He who knows, and knows that he knows,

Is wise. Follow him.

[Arabic Apothegm]

F: Student ***failure*** to earn a passing grade, credit or promotion to another grade-level: The principal will not accept the failure of students in your class (es) as indicated on your mark gathering documents.

Your solution:

Keeping a file folder for each student is, at first, time-consuming. As the year progresses, you can request or appoint a student assistant to help with the filing. Both administrators and parents are usually supportive when you can produce a folder with the following: transfer-in grades from another school, scholarship warnings, absences, failure to make up work notices, lost book fees not paid, reading stanines, placement of a basic student in regular academic classes, student written notes to other students, samples of written work and tests, etc.. The file contents are items that will offer the reader an overall picture of student skill-level, as well as, degree of motivation.

If you continue to believe that you cannot professionally recommend a passing grade, or awarding credit or promotion, you should document that you were instructed to change a grade by the directing administrator. You can be legally challenged for failing a student, as well as, passing a student who later claims she did not acquire needed knowledge.

To teach is to learn twice. [Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), French moralist, Pensees (1842). (From: 1980. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

G: The principal has requested a mission statement with ***goals*** from you for first semester.

Your solution:

Principals appreciate the teacher who has prepared a limited number of achievable goals for student progression. Documentation of measurable goals and objectives help you to "set the scene" for your evaluation meeting with the principal.

Most schools have a mission statement. You can center your goals around that mission statement and provide samples of student work as documentation of realizing those goals.

Example: Instructional and academic excellence is central to the mission of the public school. Believing that high quality education is essential, Edison Middle School makes instructional and academic excellence a priority. In keeping with this, the following goals address this commitment: (1) Provide additional opportunities for students to develop their intellectual potential both inside and outside the classroom. (2) Retain and search for a diversity of competent and caring faculty and staff sensitive to the school mission. (3) Review and modify the curriculum to assist students in being successful in the school environment.

The teacher then prepares her statement for the principal: In supporting the school mission statement (copy mission statement), I will complete the following: (1) I will write a grant proposal for funding the purchase of a computer work station within the classroom to provide students an opportunity to work at her or his individual interest and ability level. (2) I will participate in an in-service offering that increases my knowledge of students from a cultural background unlike my own. (3) I will create a classroom library of subject books of varying reading levels.

All of the above are measurable. You can produce a copy of a grant proposal, you can provide documentation of in-service training, and you can provide a list of books that you acquired through school internal funds, library loans, and donation.

Beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies. [The Reason of Church Government, (1641), BK. 11, Introduction.]

Inflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue; stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God, and famous to all ages. [Tractate of Education (1644)]

[John Milton (1608-1674). (From: 1980. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

H: ***Heat***/AC: Every morning at 8:15, the turns off.

Your solution:

MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE MAINTENANCE STAFF! Wherever you may be assigned, the maintenance staff is important to your personal comfort.

When assigned to a school constructed before 1970s, you may find your room climate controlled from individual and separate thermostats. (Most thermostats are encased in order that you won't adjust them; therefore, you are "hostage" to the good will of the maintenance staff.) The staff also, may or may not, according to their desire, supply you with paper towels, tissue, and cleaning of desks, boards, floors, etc.. I was assigned to a high school, within which we teachers had to personally ask for paper towels and soap in the restrooms. Many teachers brought their own rolls of toilet paper because none was in supply. Eating areas were never cleaned, except by individual teachers, and carpet was inundated with dirt and rainwater. Purchase *Lysol* spray for your health. Regarding the heat turned off, I would wrap wet paper towels around the enclosed thermostat for the heat to "kick back on". I had to learn to outsmart the maintenance people and the administrator, as they were cutting costs by disallowing a healthy internal climate.

Affect not as some do that bookish ambition to be stored with books and have well-furnished libraries, yet keep their heads empty of knowledge; to desire to have many books, and never to use them, is like a child that will have a candle burning by him all the while he is sleeping. [Henry Peacham (c. 1576-c.1643), The Compleat Gentleman (1622). Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. (From: 1980. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

I: The teacher ***invites*** a public librarian as a guest reader during black history month. The librarian has volunteered her time to read library books about and for blacks to black elementary-age students. The librarian is black. Students ridicule the librarian. Even

though the teacher asks the students to respect the librarian and the readings, the students continue to mock. The librarian leaves, stating, "I have better use of my time than to stay where children are rude."

Your solution:

Students were told that a guest reader would bring books from the public library for showing and reading. The public librarian was an experienced children's books selector and reader, and she was bringing public library books to the elementary school to enrich the reading experiences of the black students.

The teacher corrected the children's behavior both individually and as a class. When she recognized that the students were not responding to correction, she decided to allow the students to experience the response from the public librarian as "example setting". . .that adults do not accept inappropriate behavior from children. A follow-up lesson was held, from which students identified their behavior faults and expressed their apologies to the librarian via letters written individually. Copies of the letters were forwarded to the principal, the teacher noting what had occurred, and that the letters were mailed for continued public relations between the school and public library personnel.

The principal was not a disciplinarian, but extremely interested in community perception of the school. She sought awards and recognition. Teachers must identify goals and personality traits of individual administrators before accepting placement.

The teacher did not remain at this elementary school. The teacher had to experience several assignments before identifying the above regarding goals and personality traits. The teacher recognized that she did not enjoy a school environment at which the principal had been a guidance counselor, rather, she preferred working with an administrator who had been a social studies instructor. She distinguished a student disciplining difference with guidance counselor trained principals, a difference that conflicted with her classroom style

Shun those studies in which the work that results dies with the worker. [Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), The Notebooks (1508-1518), Vol. 1, Ch. 1. (From: 1980. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

J: *Judicature*: The following are transcripts from classroom teacher student discipline referrals: #1: "Asked student to remove gum he was 'clacking'. Student refused and told me to shut-up. I told him he would be referred. He told me to get out of the class and mad a statement using damn -- 'I'll damn will do as I please'." #2: "Refused to follow instructions to put away transistor without argument. Then refused to get out of seat and accompany to administrator's office. Had to leave room to get administrator. I suggest this student be removed from my class for counseling; he has been previously referred."

#3: "Upon noticing that my wallet was missing from my desk, I initiated a classroom search. I searched students' desks and found my wallet inside student's textbook. I retrieved my wallet."

Administrator's replies: #1: "work detail, Wed.-Fri. at 11:26"; to #2: "(Student) is to make arrangement with his mother to have a conference with you at one o'clock--to see if some understanding can be reached."; to #3: "Called parent--telephone conference. Parent will discipline him."

Your solution:

Probably the greatest discord among teachers and administrators is the manner in which administrators respond to a classroom teacher's student referral. Granted, administrators are overwhelmed with referrals and each administrator must possess the ability to judge because they rarely follow their own rules and policy, e.g., ". . .three referrals of the same student equals a three-day suspension". Too often, the teacher will find that the scale tips in favor of the student. There are many reasons for this: the administrator is too busy with other duties, the administrator does not want to experience an angry parent, the school does not want to record the number of suspensions, too much paper work is involved for documentation purposes, law enforcement does not want the student "on the streets", etc..

As Department Head, I often held detention for chronic discipline offenders during my planning period. I encouraged my colleagues to send the students to me. Often, when removed from their familiar surroundings, the students will discontinue the offensive behavior. One of the best teams with which I worked, determined that we would rotate the detention responsibility. Another technique I've developed is to telephone every parent of my students during the first month of school. I introduce myself via telephone with a few words regarding supplies and work expectations. The "word" soon reaches all students that the teacher telephones home or parent's workplace. Initially, this is time-consuming, but worth the student response of knowing that I will follow-through.

You will have to become creative, developing the facets of your own personality to which students respond. For me, the tone of my voice works; for you, a joke or hug (careful with hugs) may be effective. But, I never make a threat or utter "just one more time and….". Be consistent. I cringe at the vocabulary, but a principal once told me that the students termed me, "a bitch, but a fair bitch" -- and he assured me this was positive!

Bodily exercise, when compulsory, does no harm to the body; but knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind. [Plato, The Republic, Bk. 1, 536-E. (From: 1980. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

K: ***Kaleidoscope***: "Shifting values, information": You receive a memo from the principal:

"The above student's absences for 11/13 through 11/22 are excised as per me. Therefore, delete (student) from the failure list for unexcused absences."

Your solution:

A constant frustration for classroom teachers is the changing of administrative policy and the inequitable application of administrative policy. Regarding the principal's memo example, school board policy mandated immediate failure for students with five unexcused absences. Teachers were inundated with paperwork because students and parents were required to receive written notification of absences as they accumulated on the teacher's register. With this particular student, his record was "wiped clean" by the principal. During a faculty meeting, the teacher raised the question of inequitable application of the failure policy, in that, students who had parental support (parents who were vocal regarding the "unfairness" of the policy) were excused from the reporting process. Students who did not have parental support were failed.

The principal replied that he would personally discuss the policy with the teacher. "Knowing" looks were transferred to the teacher . . ."You are in for-it!"

When the teacher returned to her planning area office, a vice-principal was waiting and told her to come into the department head's private office. The VP closed the door and promptly demanded an apology from the teacher for embarrassing the principal. The teacher thought, "incredulous", and explained to the VP that the question was raised at the faculty meeting in order that all teachers would be able to comprehend the policy variance. The VP continued to demand an apology. The teacher remained silent for five minutes, and then left the office. The VP took no further action against the teacher. The VP was later promoted to district director.

I have actually experienced a principal asking me to whom did I owe my allegiance, the district or the student? My answer was the student. This was the "wrong" answer. As a teacher, you will have to learn "politically correct jargon", language which administrators demand to hear.

Of course, the student should be your priority, as well as, applying district and school policies consistently. If a policy is unfair to students, then teachers need to enlist the aid of parents who will bring the policy to the attention of board members. Neither the teacher nor the principal and staff should arbitrarily circumvent policy. In order for students to learn citizenship skills, they need to be directed by a united faculty and administration. Rules are not "made to be broken", but rather to be changed through established grievance procedures.

Teach me dear creature, how to think and speak. The Comedy of Errors. Act iii, SC.2, l. 33.

When I am forgotten, as I shall be, . . .Say, I taught thee. Henry VIII. Act iii, SC. 2, l. 432.

He must be taught and train'd and bid got forth. Julius Caesar. Act iv, SC 1, l. 35.

(From: 1965. Stevenson, Burton. The Home Book of Shakespeare Quotations. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.)

L: After thirty minutes assigned teacher lunch duty, students begin booing and yelling, as well as, throwing food. The assigned teacher tells the entire group, third and fourth grades (six classes), to report for afternoon detention.

Your solution:

Several points for discussion arise from this scenario:

1) Teachers are assigned special duties beyond the classroom. These duties can include before and after school bus duty, lunchroom duty, hall duty, bathroom duty, parking lot duty, substituting during your planning period, etc. . . .all of which are potential legal hassles ("you caused my child to miss her bus"; "you let a girl take my son's lunch from him"; "you let my son skip classes"; "my daughter gave you her

homework"). Alert yourself to possible conflicts with students, as well as, how the student will interpret the conflict to her parent. Keep a journal in order that you can record dates, times, and situations for future conferences. Students and parents will often "hit you from left-field". Teach yourself "politically correct" responses and obtuse words. Memorize the mission statements and school rules. Be able to note student behavior expectations from the student handbook. I particularly like referencing from "student responsibilities", e.g., "Students are expected to be ready to work" (which includes paper and pen, as well as, attitude).

2) Detention is not legally sustainable without previous written acceptance from parents. The parent must be notified that the student will remain after school hours; transportation must be provided for the student; safety measures must be observed (you are without normal administrative and security personnel); and normally, another teacher will not agree with you disciplining her students.
3) Do not announce discipline measures which you will not be able to carry through or which your immediate supervisor will not support. You will "lose face" with the students and will receive the "cold shoulder" from the administrative staff. If you "gaffe", administrators will not support you.

This lunchroom problem is termed "a squeeze" -- if you look the other way, a student can be injured; if you call an administrator, you appear incompetent. Call the administrator -- a poor opinion of you is better than a lawsuit. You will face many "squeezes" during your tenure. Keep documenting your journal!

What avails it to have our bellies full of meat, if it is not digested? (Que nous sert il d'avoir la panse pleine de viande, si elle ne se digere?) [Montaigne, Essays. Bk. I, Ch. 24. (From: 1961. Stevenson, Burton. The Home Book of Proverbs, Maxims and Familiar Phrases. New York: The Macmillan Company.)]

M: teachers removed Window screens within the school building because the screens were so dirty that a person could not see through them. Also, teachers were concerned regarding health problems resulting from the dust and dirt embedded on the screens. ***Maintenance*** requests had been made to fill-in holes atop the roof and repair windows that would not adjust for opening or closing. Pigeons began flying into the school, leaving, what students termed "natural bombs".

Your solution:

Numerous teachers filed maintenance requests regarding the screens, windows, and the pigeons. Maintenance workers replied they could not "fix" the windows. Teachers forwarded the maintenance requests to the dean of students. The dean of students replied that he would have the holes filled and he would telephone pest control. Pigeons continued to disrupt classes.

When maintenance and administrators did not resolve environmental hazards, teachers resorted to convert action. Since the school board contract stated that teachers could not notify media of negative occurrences within a school, teachers made anonymous telephone calls to the local newspaper staff writers, as well as, encouraged students to discuss the problem with their parents. A newspaper reporter and photographer entered the school and photographed pigeons sitting on the window frames and students protecting their heads with books. Photographs and copy were published. "All hell-broke-lose" from the administrative staff, with threats toward teachers. But teachers "closed rank" and the principal never learned exactly which teachers were involved with newspaper notification. Student council candidates made the pigeon-droppings an issue to take to the principal. The windows were never repaired.

At this particular school, teachers were not able to establish working relationships with the maintenance staff because they were relatives of the principal. Teachers newly entering a school must complete a "quick-study" of personnel, who is related to whom!

When the working environment is unhealthy and/or non-professional activities are taking place, because of contractual limitation or possible administrative retribution, a teacher may have to resort to what school boards term subversive methods. . .contacting newspaper reporters, parents, OSHA (OSHA representative I once contacted told me that the district was exempt from federal requirements; that reports had to be forwarded to the state agency); and known sympathetic government personnel. Do not contact union representatives. Union administrators are normally teachers who are temporarily on-leave

from their school-place duties, and will be returning to the classroom. They are not apt to intercede when resulting actions could limit their future advancement through the school personnel ranks.

Copy your forefathers, for work is carried out through knowledge; see, their words endure in writing. [The teaching for Merikare (c.2135-2040 bc.), son of a king of Heracleopolis. (From: 1980. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.)]

N: ***Networking***. Teacher writes to CBS and Diane Sawyer of 60 Minutes, requesting the donation or loan of tapes of Jerry Rawlings (Head of State, Ghana) five years previous to the 1988 broadcast, as well as, the 1988 tapes in order that students may understand the challenges of leadership in a developing country. The students would be able to compare physical and political changes in this leader between the two broadcasts. Neither CBS nor Diane Sawyer responds.

Your solution:

The lesson plan was tentative. A professional instructor is always "on the look-out" for stimulating and informative lessons, and if the teacher has no budget for purchasing

materials, she must borrow or beg. An unanswered request or a no should not be discouraging. Always request/ask. You will not receive any help, ever, if you don't ask.

During a particular teaching tenure, I received everything I requested from businesses, administrators, and parents. My colleagues were "suspicious". . ."why are you getting so much?". I asked, begged, and borrowed!

I am not willing that this discussion should close without mention of the value of a true teacher. Give me a log hut, with only a simple bench, Mark Hopkins on one end and I on the other, and you may have all the buildings, apparatus and libraries without him. [James Abram Garfield (1831-1881), Address to Williams College alumni, New York, December 28, 1871. (From: 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]

P: ***Project*** Business: (To the director of secondary education from the Project Business manager) "I received this message from one of my Project Business consultants who is assigned to (school). From the letterhead, you can see that he is from (business). The note was very upsetting, to say the least, and is the sort of thing I should share with you.": *" I met* (teacher) *last Thursday, 3/21 and it quite an experience. While I was there a rat ran across the floor and disrupted the class, but that was only a fraction of what I saw. Upon my arrival I noticed the classroom was in shambles.* (Teacher) *then explained that her room and desk had been broken into and contents tossed about the room. While she was explaining this to her students some thought it was funny, and actually laughed and*

heckled her. She was quite shaken. Later in our conversation I learned that (teacher), *a few hours away from her Ph.D. in education, was very disgruntled with the system and the quality of students. Her childhood dream of helping shape students, now was a reality of a broken window and a looted desk. What the hell is happening in our schools? I hope that it is possible to make some kind of contribution -- but my confidence of achieving that has also been shaken. Don't worry I'm not talking about not following through -- I will, perhaps with more determination than I originally had. You were right -- this is a challenging situation. I'll keep you updated."* (From the director to the Project Business manager) "I regret the impression that the consultant from (business) received at (school), but I appreciate your informing me. I have asked the principal to investigate and give me a report. I will keep you informed." (From the teacher to the principal) "It is regrettable that (consultant) arrived during a chaotic morning. Unfortunately, he did witness the aftermath of vandalism, a rat, and rude behavior of certain students. It is a shame that our social system includes individuals who fear reprisal in giving information about vandalism, or condone such. I assured (consultant) that his next visit would be more in keeping with quality education. Measures have been taken to correct such a recurrence: (1) rat poison has been placed in room; (2) student/teacher discussion was held regarding cost and consequences of destruction of school property; (3) security personnel investigated damage and interviewed students who supported the act. Indeed, it was a frustrating experience, a situation neither you nor I could anticipate. Hopefully, those students who do support our school and faculty, will offer (consultant) a chance to see us in a productive manner."

Your solution:

Teacher jargon = "cover your ass with documentation and pray for administrative support!" This setting: black director, black principal, white teacher, white businessman, white program manager, low income black school. Key protection for the teacher was within the businessman's letter ("you were right -- this is a challenging situation"), and that the businessman had no knowledge of the current inner city educational setting. District personnel are masters in developing terminology such as "challenging", for "out-of-control". The teacher had maintained excellent professional relations with the two black administrators and explained that momentarily she lost composure upon viewing the damage to the classroom. She should not have shared her personal feelings regarding "the state of teaching". Remember, bite your tongue and smile. Current philosophy of "every child can be educated" and "save the children" has stretched beyond common sense, the common sense that children must have parameters.

Everyone learned from this event: The businessman learned about the day to day teacher-struggle to impart academics to student populations lacking positive social behavior; the students learned that their behavior would not be accepted within the business setting; the manager learned that she should prepare her consultants for the inner city school setting;

the administrators learned that the professional teacher will work to respond to negative student behavior and negative public relations.

A teacher who can arouse a feeling for one single good action, for one single good poem, accomplishes more than he who fills our memory with rows on rows of natural objects, classified with name and form. [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Effective Affinities, Book 1, Chap. 5 (1808). (From: 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.)]

R: ***Race relations:*** A is a white female social studies classroom teacher; B is A's daughter and the department student assistant; C is a white male and the department head; D is a black female social studies classroom teacher. (The department members include the two females, the department head, six white male classroom teachers, and the student assistant.)

D requests to C, the help of B. C tells D no. D questions why C is denying her the student assistant. Again, C tells D no.

Later, B, appearing shaken and scared, enters A's classroom and tells her mother that C argued with D, making racial remarks. C and D each pulled B, with the final result of C locking the student assistant in a workroom.

Your solution:

The mother was a second-year teacher, and without guidance went directly to the principal and demanded that C be removed as department head. The principal said he would look into her complaint. D, B, and A met and initiated a formal complaint in writing, one copy to the principal and one copy to the union building representative. A privately spoke to C regarding his racial attitude toward D, as well as, his racial comments during department meetings. A and D never received a reply from the principal. D considered filing a police report. A and D were intimidated by the principal's reputation. He was known as "hard-charger" by teachers. He had been a school board favorite for decades, as well as, a member of the state educational hierarchy.

Both A and D were new teachers to the profession. Both were naïve, in that, they thought schools were institutions of support and "right". They both transferred to different schools the following school year. A transferred her daughter to another school. D requested the union to inquire regarding the joint complaint letter. The union informed her that no record of the complaint letter existed. Twenty years later, C was still the department head. Several principals related to A that "hard charger" had labeled A and D "difficult". "Hard charger" was always courteous to A and D at district meetings.

A and D should have requested that B's father file a formal complaint with the school superintendent regarding his daughter's safety. A should have encouraged D to follow through with the police report. A and D should have immediately contacted a newspaper reporter.

Recognizing the litigation decade of the nineties, every teacher should be personally acquainted with an attorney.

No bubble is so iridescent or floats longer than that blown by the successful teacher. [Sir William Osler (1849-1919), Physician and Regius Professor of Medicine, University of Oxford; Life of Sir William Osler, Vol. 11, Chap. 31. (From: 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.)]

S: A female teacher begins receiving notes from an assistant principal, first, responses to student work forwarded by the teacher to the assistant principal for his general information:

"This is great. Thanks for sharing."

"Thanks for the warm greetings. I am always inspired after I have talked with you."

"I enjoyed them all. The very first one I think best. Give the kids my regards."

Then, notes to the teacher started appearing in her mailbox, on her desk, and hand delivered by student office assistants:

"Good Morning. Since we are both early birds here at school We could one morning -- enjoy a cup of coffee -- After all I gave you a key -- to get in Comment??"

"Good Morning: Tomorrow -- will probably be my real busy time If I don't see you--have a happy holiday One thing -- If you still believe in (sic) *misthetoe? I'll bring some tomorrow. Have a good day. Misthetoe, yes or no"*

"By the way--

think we can

have a quiet talk

some day"

"Hello Its good to see you back -- you were (sic) *miss -- hope every thing is fine By the way --you once said -- you have a coke around 12:15 -- I have been there -- you haven't Well, maybe -- one day -- Destiny! Have a good day!!"*

"Hello Again. I (sic) *wil try -- may be hard to get for you I read once -- if you build a archway between two people -- without door's or locks -- and they are able to see they share -- that time or distance cannot erase Hope we can begin Still waiting for that coke and a quiet time."*

Your solution:

Each teacher is assigned to a particular administrator for reporting and evaluations. The teacher should maintain the offensive by regularly providing that administrator samples of lesson plans and student work. (These papers are to be kept in a notebook for scheduled evaluations, and periodically, samples should be forwarded.) Rereading the scenario, the teacher was following the above procedure, and at first, the assistant principal responded with appropriate remarks. The AP soon graduated to ***sexual harassment***. The teacher thought the notes were offensive and began to share them with department colleagues. The department colleagues, all male, had varying opinions:

humorous to "what a man does to a pretty woman" to "I wouldn't like my wife receiving them".

The teacher became concerned when students starting delivering the notes, with "smirky" smiles, and the AP began appearing inside her classroom, sitting at the rear of the room. Following policy procedure, she went to the department head, who laughed at the letters and the poor grammar, and when reading that the AP had given the teacher a master key to the school, said to her, "You can reach in my pocket for my keys -- you know the BIG one".

A department member was the professional union building representative, as well as, one of her colleagues who did not find the harassment humorous. He offered to schedule an appointment with the principal and notify him of the harassment. An appointment was scheduled and the teacher, the colleague, and the principal met. The principal, upon reviewing the notes, remarked that the AP had be harassing female teachers for years, but no one had made a formal complaint. The principal then offered to fire the VP upon a formal complaint from the teacher. The colleague/union representative objected because the VP held 28 years service with the school board, the AP's wife was district supervisor, and the representative felt the female teacher would be "blackballed". Instead, agreement was made that the AP could not evaluate the teacher, nor could he enter her classroom. Although partially satisfying to the teacher and her colleague, concern remained that the AP would continue his harassment to other females.

The female teacher transferred from the high school to a middle school. The colleague later accepted an administrative position with another school district. The AP also transferred, to the same middle school as the teacher. He did not approach her again.

Thus, we come to the "Anita Hill syndrome". . .no one knows what deals occur "behind closed doors". A woman does have to "make-a-livin' "!

Let such teach others who themselves

Excel,

And censure freely who have written

Well.

[Alexander Pope (1688-1744). "A thousand years may elapse before there shall appear another man with a power of versification equal to that of Pope. --Dr. Johnson, (1781): Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson ." Verse is from, Essay on Criticism, Line 15 (1711). Entire quote is from: 1955. Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.]

S: ***Sharing***: The teacher reports that when she left her classroom, Friday afternoon, there were student-created Indian clay objects displayed. These art forms were destroyed sometime after sixth period, Friday, and Monday morning. An English class inhabits her classroom, sixth period. She wrote security that she was concerned because the students were proud of their work and wanted to take the objects home after their studies were completed.

Your solution:

Teachers normally consider the classrooms assigned to them, as theirs; and, why not? -- The teacher is responsible for safety, maintenance, and often "graded" by administrators as to the "attractiveness" (student work, pictures, displays) of the room. Unfortunately, because of poor administrative projections, schools become overcrowded and teachers double-up with rooms or are assigned to converted storage areas, gym, auditoriums, and even half a portable classroom. All of these assignments are hellish: your "roommate" may be a "slob"; storage areas usually do not have windows nor whiteboards, electrical outlets, etc.; gyms and auditoriums offer students too much space, without desktops; and sharing a portable classroom is distracting.

When I was a "junior" teacher within a school facility, I "floated" every class period. (You need to note that although you earn seniority years through teaching within a district, each individual school logs internal seniority. When transferred to another school, you begin at first year seniority within that school.) Thus, the lower your seniority rank, the less likely you will have your own room, or the more likely you will be told to share when space becomes limited.

The sharing scenario example contains the solution: the teacher brought the damage problem to the attention of the proper administrator. The administrator may or may not advise the English class teacher. The teacher will limit display opportunities for the students, and during the end-of-the-year wrap-up, may request a non-sharing assignment for the upcoming school year.

He whiche will teche and lerne some other, ought first to corryge & examyne hym self. [William Caxton (1484), English printer, Fables of Auian iii. (From: 1961. The Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press.)]

V: ***Vandalism***: Teacher forwarded the following memo to the administrator for curriculum: "I am concerned about damage to property under my charge. Friday, September 17, I reported two missing texts, Vocabulary Workshops, and pages torn from four other texts of the same title. It is my belief that this vandalism transpired prior to the meeting of my seventh period class. Friday, September 17, all of my English classes met in the library."

Your solution:

Always forward a written report to the administrator in-charge of curriculum when textbook vandalism occurs.

Unfortunately, the memo was total for what the teacher could do regarding vandalism of textbooks. Individual schools have individual policies. Most often, principals do not follow district policies regarding textbooks. Some principals will charge students for textbooks lost or damaged, some will not. The general attitude is that taxpayers "foot" replacement. At the beginning of each year, I try to explain to students that when textbooks are issued and then lost, each book replacement costs all taxpayers, that their parents' taxes will increase; therefore, please practice citizenship.

You will learn that districts often contract the same book for seven to ten years, regardless of copyright date. You will learn that some administrators (and parents) don't care what the copyright date is, just that their student has a book! Once, when teaching history, my book allotment did not provide for total students in my classes. A parent complained that her son did not have a book. The assistant principal notified me that I needed to provide a book to the student. When I replied that there were no more texts available, instead of ordering more books, he told me to find a discontinued text from surplus . . .that a "history book is a history book". This assistant principal for curriculum was elected to the school board.

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Teaching is nothing but leading the mind of him we teach, to the knowledge of our inventions, in that track by which we attained the same. [Hobbes's Elem. Philos. (1839) by Sir William Molesworth. (From: 1961. The Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press.)]

W: *War*: Some teachers and students are still fighting The War Between the States -- teacher memo: "I am requesting that a member of the administrative staff attend my sixth period Black History, as soon as possible to quell any possible volatile expression of disobedience.

Two students are falsely using racial prejudice as an excuse to display their problems. I asked that one of these students be counseled, as I understand that he has a history of problems.

I feel that other respectful students and I are having to experience verbal abuse from students who have not been severely disciplined by the school administrators. I do not feel that threats made by students about me should go unnoticed.

Mr. (colleague) advised me of a conference with (one student) when threats were made in the presence of the AP. The two students who have been sent to the AP's office from this class are (students' names)."

Your solution:

Several problems were occurring within this classroom: (1) black students resented a white instructor for Black History; (2) white students resented being scheduled into a class about black history; (3) one of the black students requiring discipline measures had repeatedly drawn pictures during class of another teacher and used his pocket knife to stab the pictures; (4) possibly, the disciplining administrator was afraid of the student; (5) possibly, the white administrators did not want the black history class to be a success.

Although the instructor was popular with both black and white students, the black students considered the class "theirs", that the class should not be integrated. The white students, expressing their support for the teacher but not the subject, all withdrew from the class. Issues such as having a black instructor and to be able to write papers using black "dialect" distracted from instruction time. Administrative staff refused counsel for students, even though the school staff did include a human relations counselor.

The course was withdrawn from scheduling at the close of the second semester. The FBI later sought the volatile student for undisclosed criminal activity.

This was one of those courses "doomed" to fail. Apparently, the administrative staff, when planning, did not support the course. A popular, respected teacher was chosen for instructor, but no support help was offered. The instructor did attend a university summer course relating to black studies in order to design a meaningful syllabus for the students. Both black and white students brought their predilection with them, and without counseling available, the teacher was left to fight the "war" alone.

When Santayana came into a sizable legacy, he was able to relinquish his post on the Harvard faculty. The classroom was packed for his final appearance, and Santayana did himself proud. He was about to conclude his remarks when caught sight of a forsythia beginning to blossom in a patch of muddy snow outside the window. He stopped abruptly, picked up his hat, gloves, and walking stick, and made for the door. There he turned. "Gentlemen," he said softly, "I shall not be able to finish that sentence. I have just discovered that I have an appointment with April." [George Santayana (1863-1952), Spanish-born philosopher and poet. He spent many years at Harvard (1889-1911) and at Oxford. His philosophy is best set out in the four-volume Realms of Being (1927-40). (From: 1985. Fadiman, Clifton. The Little Brown Book of Anecdotes. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.)]